



## More Is Less: Comedy and Sound

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White has no trace of anguish on her face. Her last orgasmic moans are an appropriate preface to her death, since death, mother's ultimate release from sin, is ironically tied to penetration and sexual release.

As the film comes to an end, Carrie literally pulls her mother off the wall, and returns to the closet she rejected as a young woman. There is no peace in death for Carrie as there is for her mother. A few glimpses of Carrie hunched up in the closet intercut with shots of the burning, collapsing house and the quaking Christ statue suggest that she dies a tormented child. The film's closing sequence carries forth this idea. In a

lyrical soft-focus scene, the single survivor of the prom massacre brings a bouquet of flowers to Carrie's grave. This sequence has tremendous shock value because the audience is set up to expect a rather peaceful, bland ending. DePalma gives us hope for a release from the film's torment and violence, only to catch us when we are most vulnerable, as Carrie is caught at the prom and at home afterward. The shock ending is perhaps DePalma's way of impressing upon the audience a sense of anxiety and apprehension without let up or relief. Carrie is dead, but here, as in DePalma's other films, we feel the torment will go on forever. There is no peace.

**PAUL WARSHOW**

## More Is Less: Comedy and Sound

*Recent "improvements" to Keaton's classic silent comedy The General raise major aesthetic questions as well as practical ones of fidelity to an artist's work. For silent comedy was not just a form that happened accidentally to be deprived of sound. Its silence, broken only by music, was an essential constituent of its stylization—of the very qualities that made it uniquely comic. In the article below Paul Warshow describes how tampering with The General does subtle violence to the work of one of our greatest film-makers, and sets an ominous precedent.*

One of the saddest facts about moviegoing is that one can almost never get to see a film the way the film-maker intended it to be seen. First there are the mutilations made even before the film's release: tampering by the producer with the director's completed work, or at earlier stages in production, cuts forced by the censor, etc. Then, there are the defects in individual prints. Even first-run prints can be off in color, or in other ways; and new prints of old films can be very poor. With older prints, the picture gets scratched and faded; the sound gets blurred and faint; frames are destroyed, throwing the rhythm off, causing not only visual

discontinuities but also the loss of syllables and notes of music. And when the negative is not cared for, good new prints become impossible. Moreover, whatever quality a print has is often sabotaged in the projection, either by inferior equipment or by the projectionist himself—so that the picture is faint or out-of-focus or cropped, the sound is fuzzy or at the wrong level, or the reels are shown in the wrong order.

All the above post-release losses are due to passivity: the failure to expend effort or money. The sins involved are sins of omission. But there is another, opposite way in which an old film can be

spoiled: when the distributor actively and misguidedly tries to "improve" it by "modernizing" it. A good example of this sort of "improvement" is what was done to *Gone With the Wind* when it was re-released in 1967. Fearing that the old shape of the frame would look forbiddingly plain and old-fashioned, the distributors fit the 1939 Academy Award multi-winner on the Procrustean bed of the widescreen: they spread out the image, cutting off the top and the bottom, not only spoiling the composition but also eliminating foreheads, heads, feet and other non-essentials and washing out the color. The viewer was given significantly Less, but decked out in the appearance of More.

An analogous thing has been done recently to Buster Keaton's silent comedy feature, *The General*, in the sound print distributed by Raymond Rohauer and Jay Ward Productions: the only 35mm sound print in distribution. And here the changes are even more serious, not least because *The General*, unlike *Gone With the Wind*, is a masterpiece by one of the great film-makers (perhaps the greatest film-maker of the silent era).

The distributors have made basically two kinds of change: one, the less serious, in the visuals; the other, far more serious, because fundamental, in the sound track. Both seem to have been carried out, at least in part, in the futile and misguided attempt to "modernize" the film, to make it seem less like a silent and a product of its period.

Let us deal first with the less serious change: the changing of the intertitles to subtitles superimposed over the images—and, in at least one case, the complete elimination of the text of an intertitle. The worst thing about the change is that the subtitles keep one from giving one's full attention to the images (this is of course also true with subtitles in foreign sound films, but there it is the lesser of two evils). Moreover, aesthetically speaking, most of the intertitles probably *should* be separate: at least those that contain, not a functional bit of dialogue, but a fairly independent joke (and aesthetically "impure" as written jokes are in a silent film, with Keaton these jokes are usually funny or charming). The change might—wrongly, I think—seem justified because, in eliminating the intertitles, it eliminates an annoyance presented by the intertitles in almost all silent films: they slow the film down inordinately because they are up there

excruciatingly long (I can usually read them three times). But the solution is not subtitles: the solution is to shorten the length of time the intertitles are on the screen, leaving them up only as long as it takes everyone but cretins and illiterates to read them. (Reading speeds vary widely, and slow readers must also be considered; but in 1926 the reading speed of audiences must have been significantly slower than now.)

In this print the text of at least one title has been dropped entirely. Escaped from the Union men, as well as from a bear, Johnny (Keaton) and Annabelle huddle together (he kneeling awkwardly with his arms around her, she sitting with her head on his shoulder), frightened, in the woods in late evening in the middle of a drenching storm. Fade-out. In the original a title appears: "After a nice, quiet, refreshing night's rest." Fade-in to almost the identical shot, only better-lit, with the two in the same uncomfortable position. Whoever decided to eliminate the title and follow the dark shot immediately with the brighter one may have thought this would improve the joke by making it "purely visual" and more subtle (or they may have decided that, since the text couldn't work as a subtitle, it had to be eliminated). But the title, both as a text and as a rhythmical "beat" or "rest," is an essential part of the joke, and eliminating it attenuates the joke to practically nothing.

But the really terrible change is in the sound track: in the addition, along with the music, of realistic, quasi-synchronous sound. While Johnny is trying to escape silently with Annabelle from the Union headquarters, a window falls down on his hands: this print supplies the realistic sound of the window falling and landing. A group of soldiers takes aim, smoke rises from their guns, enemies fall dead: this print supplies the sound, as realistic as in any sound film, of the guns going off (indeed most of the realistic sound in this print is the sound of gunfire).

On the face of it this change offers us More, but in fact it gives us immeasurably Less, because it temporarily destroys the film at its roots—as it would with any silent comedy. For the absence of realistic sound is silent comedy's defining element, its very foundation. To add realistic sound is to destroy this foundation and throw off the delicate

balance between stylization and realism that enables the comedy to work (I will elaborate on this later). Although most of the audience will not be conscious of the process itself, at the point in *The General* when realistic sound comes in, it is as though a cloud has appeared and darkened the world of film. The stylized fantasy-world of silent comedy is temporarily gone and has been replaced by a much more realistic world: suddenly the pain is "real" pain, the deaths are "real" deaths; it is no longer the world Keaton gave us, it is no longer funny.

It must be admitted that the people who added the realistic sound to this print have exercised a certain amount of restraint. They have not inserted realistic sound in all the places they could have, only in some, so the comic world is destroyed only in patches, temporarily. The musical score, on the whole, is appropriate and, as musical accompaniment generally does, helps push the film in the direction of greater stylization, both when the music is the sole accompaniment and when it is joined by the realistic sound (which pushes the film in the opposite direction: toward realism). The film is still funny. It is simply less funny, funny less often, than it was. But this restraint hardly makes the additions that *have* been made less objectionable. And in one way this piecemeal destruction is even worse, in that it's more insidious. If the violations were total, many more people would be aware of it. This way they are likely to conclude that Keaton is less funny than he's cracked up to be—or than they remembered.

It's true that the distributors also have silent prints available (one version is visually identical to the sound print, the other is "authentic"\*) . Raymond Rohauer says he prefers to watch the silent "authentic" version, which he says should be shown with live accompaniment, but says that version is for "purists"; and he approves the showing of the sound version to the "mass audience," who

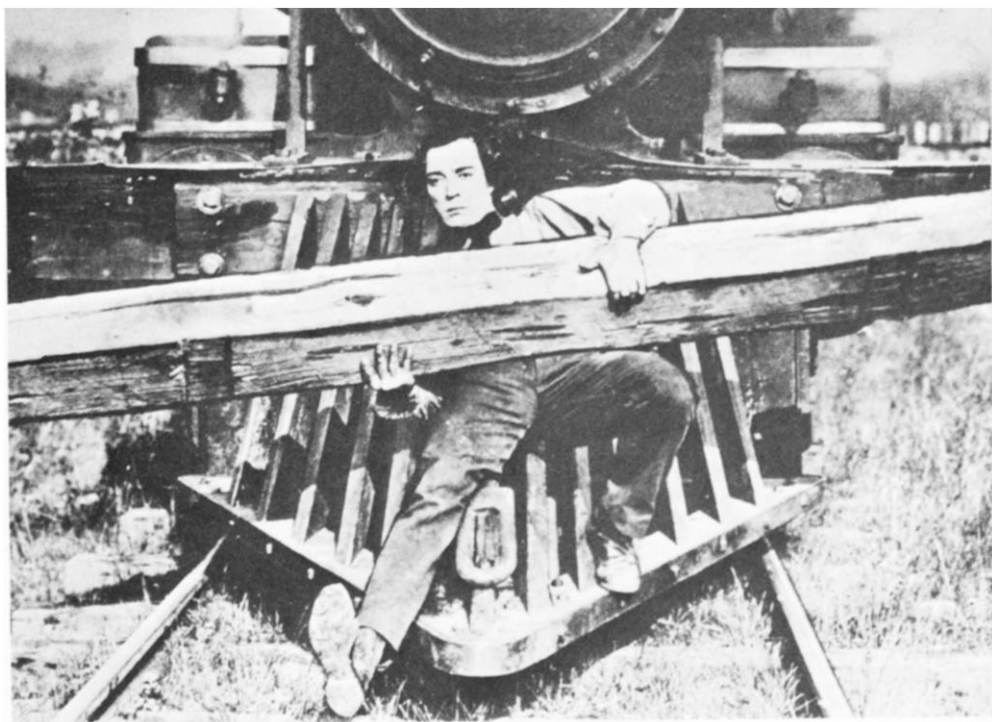
"just want to have a good time on a Saturday night." To prove that this is the version the mass audience "wants," he puts forth the information that "they" have "never complained." But this is just a new instance of an old commercial sophistry, fallacious on several counts. First of all, most members of the "mass audience" aren't conscious of the alternatives. If they were, they might not care or might even prefer a non-"modernized" version. Second, only a small fraction of those bothered are going to register a complaint. Third, anyone who does register a complaint automatically becomes a "purist" and outside the "mass audience." And finally, even if it could be shown that there is a "mass audience" that prefers bastardized versions of a great artist's work, that would hardly prove that the right thing is to give them these versions.

Moreover, the choice supposedly offered by the distributors, between the showing of this sound version and an authentic showing of an authentic version, is more apparent than real. Besides the bastardized sound version, the only versions the distributors offer us have *no sound track*—and, as Rohauer indicated, are meant to be shown with an appropriate live musical accompaniment. But live accompaniment of silent films is pretty much a thing of the past. It is still done at New York's Museum of Modern Art and maybe one or two similar places, but only a few theaters have it, and they are ones devoted to camp nostalgia. Thus, from the standpoint of sound, *all* the 35mm prints available are inappropriate—for the choice the distributors really offer us is between the bastardized sound version and one of their silent versions shown *without accompaniment*. The "silence" (in other words, the sound of the audience and other ambient sound) that occurs in the latter case, while preferable to *this* sound track, is likewise inappropriate, for silent films were meant to be shown with a fitting musical accompaniment, which itself provides an important element of stylization.

The solution, of course, for *any* silent comedy, is to add an appropriate musical sound track, without—I need hardly add—realistic sound effects (this has of course already been done with numerous silent films; Chaplin himself added such sound tracks, with themes he had composed, to

\*In his "filmographical comments" at the end of his book, *Keaton*, Daniel Moews shows that minor variations among available prints of *The General* (these include 16mm prints distributed by others than Raymond Rohauer and Jay Ward Productions) make it hard to know which version is truly authentic, if any. But Rohauer's "authentic" version does not have the alterations of titles that his other two versions have. (Moews does not say whether any of the 16mm versions have sound tracks.)

THE  
GENERAL



several of his silents). The choice of music is naturally crucial, since the wrong music can be just as detrimental as realistic sound. Determining what music is appropriate does not require genius, but it does require care and taste and a sense of what the film-maker was doing. Many silent films (*The General* is one) had "cue sheets" made especially for them, which cued the accompanist into specific, usually familiar, tunes at specific points in the film; others had scores composed especially for them. These scores and cue sheets may in some cases be quite satisfactory, even the best choice imaginable. In other cases (because the aptness of a tune has dated along with the tune itself, or for other reasons) they may not be. But in any case one would do best to stick with this music unless one can come up with something one is sure is better.

It is ironic that the man who has sanctioned this violation of *The General* (the changes were actually carried out by Jay Ward Productions, to whom he leased the rights) is Raymond Rohauer—for next to Keaton himself, Rohauer is the person to whom present-day Keaton lovers owe the most. Not only is he responsible for the films' current 35mm distribution; he also restored the films and brought them back into distribution at a time when Keaton's reputation was in eclipse. And a beautiful job

of restoration it was: whatever complaints one has about the sound print of *The General*, its pictorial quality is superb. From all the evidence, Rohauer has been motivated not only by commerce but also by a genuine love for Keaton's work. But we should not let our gratitude to Rohauer inhibit us from protesting strongly against the desecration of Keaton's work that he has recently authorized. (Incidentally, this sound print of *The General* has "Produced by Raymond Rohauer and Jay Ward Productions" in the credits, leading anyone who doesn't know better to think these fellows were actually around helping Keaton make the film.)

The issue, of course, extends far beyond *The General*. Jay Ward Productions, who made the changes in this print, are now at work making sound versions of all of Keaton's silent features—and these will be the only sound versions available in 35mm. If they go on thinking that the kinds of changes they made in *The General* are just fine—are, moreover, what the public wants—they are going to make the same sorts of changes in the other films. They will go on changing intertitles to subtitles and are likely to become even freer in the adding of sound effects, the complete elimination of titles, and who knows what other changes. And the distributors of other silent films will follow suit.

And if the distributors decide that bastardized versions are what the public wants, they probably won't bother to keep authentic versions in distribution. In fact they might not even bother to *preserve* authentic versions. Things might reach the point—and this would be tragic—where the authentic versions were lost forever.

One crucial difference between the desecration of films from passivity and the desecration of films in the name of active improvement is that the latter, unlike the former, is based on an assumption about what the public wants. This makes the latter easier to deal with, for if the distributors can be convinced that these "improvements" are in fact something the public does *not* want, they will desist. We should protest now, making it clear to the distributors that we do *not* want these violations and that we will not allow them to be made without a fight.\*

## II

I wrote that "the absence of realistic sound is silent comedy's defining element, its very foundation. To add realistic sound is to destroy this foundation and throw off the delicate balance between stylization and realism that enables the comedy to work." I would now like to elaborate on this, first to make clearer why this particular kind of change, in *any* silent comedy, is so destructive, and second, because the subject is of intrinsic interest itself and the problem with this print offers a good occasion to go into it. (Indeed this violation of *The General* has served as an unintentional test case, giving us data, much as the behavior of a brain-damaged person helps us understand a normal brain.)

All art, of course, is stylized. And to a large extent the limitations inherent in the particular medium determine the main thrust of the stylization: it is within these limitations that the artist must work, and within them he can choose among further remaining options of stylization. In painting, for example, such inherent limitations as two-dimensionality and the boundaries of the canvas (and of course, as opposed to film, the lack of *change* in the picture) are themselves the initial defining elements of stylization. And with film, the

same is true of *its* inherent limitations: two-dimensionality and the boundaries of the screen (limitations it shares with painting) and for non-color films (which means all silent films) the restriction to black-and-white.\* (Some ruling limitations are the conventions of a genre rather than the inherent limitations of the medium: such restrictions as the unities in classical French theater or the rule, in Greek tragedy, that the violence must take place off-stage, do not arise from any limitations of the stage as a medium; but as long as they were taken to be inviolable, they were hardly less powerful for that.)

Comedy depends on a higher degree of stylization, or at least a different kind of stylization, than non-comedy. The material of comedy, after all, is basically the same as that of non-comedy: mainly difficulty, pain, violence, and suffering. In addition to the "happy ending," some special form of stylization has to take place to put this material on a level where the spectator will experience it as funny rather than painful. Silent film comedy, like animated cartoon comedy, depends on a particularly high level of stylization because so much of its material consists of overt physical violence and physical danger.

\*In *Film as Art*, Rudolf Arnheim does an excellent job of enumerating film's limitations and showing that many of its artistic attributes arise from these very limitations. At the time (1933) he was largely defending film—*silent* film—against those people who claimed it could not be an art because it was a mere reproduction of reality. But he makes the same error about sound film that he so skillfully exposes when it is made about silent film: he takes sound film to be a mere reproduction of reality, or nearly, with no significant limitations, so that *it* cannot be an art form. Sound film, of course, has numerous limitations, many of them the same ones that are basic to silent film and that Arnheim so clearly demonstrated. Sound film is *closer* to being a reproduction of reality, but of course it is still a long way from being one. In a later (1938), extremely wrong-headed article ("A New Laocoön: Artistic Composites and the Talking Film," included with the current addition of *Film as Art*), Arnheim advances a different argument against the sound film: that it cannot work because it tries to combine two irreconcilable media. His argument is based on the most abstract and unfounded reasoning; it is as divorced from concrete example as the earlier book is grounded in it. The best succinct answer one can offer to this article is that, in the sound film, picture and natural sound (including dialogue) combine successfully because their relationship is *analogous* to the relationship of sight and sound in the real world. I mention Arnheim's opinions on the sound film partly because I will advance opinions below that are in virtually total opposition to his.

\*Rohauer's address is Suite 16B, 44 West 62nd St., New York, NY 10023.

What is true of all art is of course true in the specific case of comedy: the limitations which define the medium, or the genre, lay the groundwork for the form the stylization will take. With animated cartoon comedy—beyond the general limitations of the film medium—it is the extreme lack of realism of the cartoon image that is the principal basis of stylization. We are seeing, not photographs of living beings, but drawings—and highly unrealistic and stylized drawings—of living beings. That the beings are usually not human, but animals, yet animals who talk and in other ways act like human beings (as well as like animals), provides an even greater distance. This distance allows us to find amusing the spectacle of these beings undergoing physical abuse which would be agony for any real creature to undergo—and which it would be near-agony to *behold* more realistic fictional creatures undergo. Beyond that, it allows what is in turn a further element of stylization: these creatures' bodies undergo metamorphoses which defy the laws of physics—they are flattened, stretched, dismembered and reconstructed—and then the creatures emerge alive and without permanent injury. (When animal-cartoons are bad, it is usually by having the balance between violence and stylization thrown off in the direction of the former, so that for an adult they are painful rather than funny. In recent years this genre seems to have dried up entirely.)

With silent comedy, there are of course many sources of stylization (for instance, various kinds of stylized body movement) at the option of the filmmaker; and there are the various given limitations of the film medium which constitute underlying, immutable sources of stylization. But the crucial source of stylization is that "given" which, we might say, *defines* silent comedy, the given that distinguishes silent from sound film: the absence of realistic sound. This absence is, paradoxically, the foundation on which this art form rests. Because of this absence, silent film *automatically* is more stylized and seems less real than sound film; and it is this automatic stylization that makes possible silent comedy's special kind of fantasy-world and allows, in particular, its special kind and degree of comic violence, pain, and danger.

Even though the absence of realistic sound is a defining characteristic of all silent film, I have

spoken of it as a blessing to silent *comedy* only. That is because for non-comedy, I believe, this absence, far from being a blessing, is an enormous liability, and for the very reason that it is good for comedy: its automatic stylization and subversion of realism. Thus from the silent period it is, with possibly a few exceptions, *only* the comedy that still works, that fully survives artistically and that we can still enjoy without allowances and reservations. No matter how well it was done, the best feature-length silent film drama (Sjöström, Stroheim, Griffith, Chaplin in *A Woman of Paris*), striving toward realism, was inevitably prevented by the lack of realistic sound—both dialogue and "noise"—from attaining its object. We can admire it, but we cannot wholeheartedly accept it, because it does not—could not—achieve what it set out to do. Those non-comedy silent directors (Eisenstein may be the best example) who strove less for realism and more for some alternative form of stylization suffer less from the lack of realistic sound; but, at least when their films approach feature length, they also suffer from it. I want to stress that it is *feature-length* silent drama that can never entirely succeed, for shorter film dramas are not hindered in the same way by the lack of realistic sound. Not seeking as much scope, they don't require as much realistic "weight." Many of them tend to be more "film poems" than fully developed dramas. On the whole, one could say

*Keaton's delicate mime, here of listening, becomes pointless if realistic sound is added.*



that the longer a silent film drama is, the more it will suffer from the lack of realistic sound.\*

I recently saw a print of *Birth of a Nation* with skillfully-added realistic sound (also mainly the sound of Civil War gunfire); and, for the above reasons, this change seems to me quite a different matter from the comparable change in *The General*. With *Birth of a Nation* the change seemed to me not only not objectionable, but actually to improve the film by bringing it closer to the realism it was striving for and was kept away from only by a lack of technical means. (In fact at screenings Griffith and other silent directors tried to create many of the same effects by other means, and Griffith would very likely have been delighted with the additions to this print.)†

Silent film—silent comedy included—was of course never silent. There was always live music. With some films the performer could play whatever he chose; with others, as I said earlier, there were special cue sheets or even original scores. As for the instrumentation, it ranged from solo piano or organ all the way to (at the premiere of *Birth of a Nation*) a 70-piece orchestra. In addition, especially in the bigger theaters and after the medium had existed for a decade or so, there were sound effects, approximate or exact. The sources for the effects varied from the piano or organ to drums and other percussive instruments to thunder sheets to actual guns firing blanks backstage. Although the documentary evidence of what kind of sound occurred at specific showings is very limited, one can be sure that (especially when the directors themselves were in control) sound effects for comedy were rarer than for non-comedy and were

different: more selective, less realistic, lighter and more stylized. (There would be a similar difference in the music. As with most sound film, the music for comedy—except the sentimental or melodramatic scenes—would be such as to lighten and stylize the action, to “dissociate” the viewer and decrease emotion, whereas in non-comedy it was used to increase emotion.)

The arrival of sound (that is, the sound track and dialogue) destroyed the art of all the silent comedians. But in Charlie Chaplin's career, the transition is uniquely illustrative because it is in several ways a special case. To begin with, Chaplin is one of the two major silent comedian-directors; what's more, he is clearly “major” in certain ways that Keaton is not. And his transition to sound has several unique characteristics: he had after sound came in (as he had had before) total control over his own production; because of this control, the transition for him happened in stages rather than all at once; and his *talking* films, although they are all aesthetic failures (*Limelight* comes closest to being a success), are still highly interesting and original and in some ways even constitute a “development” over the earlier films.

When the sound track came in, dialogue and other synchronous sound were considered mandatory: they were the whole reason for having a sound track. Chaplin alone—for a whole decade and two features (probably his two best films)—used the sound track not to have a different *kind* of sound than he had had, but to have complete control over the kind of sound he had already been using: music. In *City Lights* and *Modern Times* there is synchronous sound, and even use of voices, but it is very limited and of very special kind. In *City Lights* there are two instances of synchronous sound—the sound of the bell in the boxing sequence and the sound of the whistle Charlie swallows—but they are stylized by their very isolation; they certainly don't make the scenes seem any more realistic. In *Modern Times* the unrealistic “plink” that accompanies the repeated falling of a loose board on Charlie's head, far from underscoring the pain, distances us from it: it is on the same level of stylization as Charlie's stylized dazed reaction. What's more, these are all the kind of sound effects that Chaplin might well have used to accompany one of his silent films. In *Modern Times*,

\*Speech is of course not simply one more element of realistic sound, of the same order as the others: to introduce speech to film is a uniquely monumental change. The implications of this change have been much discussed and could profitably be discussed even further, but this is not the place to do so.

†It is important to stress that adding realistic sound to a non-comedy silent is also tampering with the work of the past; that it should be done well, in a way that can be defended, or not at all (in some cases it may be possible to show that effects are equivalent to those that were authorized for the original screenings); that such prints should be regarded as new (and in a sense “experimental”) versions; and that they should never be allowed to make the original unavailable.



there are two uses of voices, both synchronous, but these are likewise distanced and not "realistic": the voice of the factory supervisor accompanying his televised image in the men's room; and Charlie's voice, singing a song—in a nonsense pseudo-French (thus distanced twice more)—in a nightclub. Chaplin evidently realized that going any further toward realism in the use of sound would destroy the conventions on which his comedy rested.\*

In *The Great Dictator* Chaplin gave in and, except in a few scenes, used a conventional sound track, with extensive dialogue and synchronous sound. At the same time he tried to retain most of the other conventions and stylistic traits of silent comedy (including the Tramp character). He had set himself a self-contradictory, impossible task. The film is a hybrid that works only in snatches:

\*There have been very few other attempts to make feature-length silent comedies in the sound era: Pierre Étaix's features and Mel Brooks's *Silent Movie* are probably the only pure examples. Jacques Tati's films and René Clair's early sound films are interesting borderline cases. Both have widespread use of voices and sound effects, so they certainly are not aesthetically "silent" the way *City Lights* and *Modern Times* are. Yet their use of voices and sound effects is highly selective, so that in the most important ways they are aesthetically closer to silent films than to sound films. The dialogue is infrequent, and what there is is almost always brief, even monosyllabic; it is never discursive or analytic (as opposed to much of the dialogue in Chaplin's talkies). Much of Clair's use of voices is in songs (in fact these films of his are semi-musicals). In Clair, the "weight" of the sound effects is mitigated by their relative infrequency and by his avoidance of "pleonasm" (i.e., he gives us sound effects only of off-screen events, which thus supply only information we do not get visually). Tati's sound effects are more widespread and more central, but they are stylized by being isolated, carefully selected, and

mainly in those scenes (such as Hynkel's dance with the globe) without realistic sound—and in the stylized pseudo-German of Hynkel's comic and terrifying tirades. It is only in Chaplin's later films, as he discards silent-comedy conventions almost entirely, that realistic sound stops being a problem (though these films have other problems). *Lime-light* is the best of these—and largely because it is the one which has most freed itself from those conventions.

If realistic sound demolished the art of all the silent comedians, it couldn't have been otherwise, since the lack of realistic sound was the key element in their art. To add realistic sound, after the fact, to their silent films, is to tilt fatally the scale they so artfully balanced. It is to go back and destroy what history didn't have a chance to destroy.

often unrealistic (frequently by being *exaggerated*). Moreover, these films may be able to assimilate a greater amount of realistic weight because, although they owe a great deal to American silent comedy, their more "refined" French comedy depends much less on overt physical violence.

I think people are too ready to assume that silent comedy is an aesthetically dead genre. They may base this assumption on the shortcomings of the attempts that have been made, but these attempts could just as well prove the opposite: *Silent Movie* and Étaix's features are pretty good. (Chaplin's two features and Clair's best early sound films are as good as anything in film, but since they are chronologically a direct continuation of silent film, they are in that sense a unique, unrepeatable case). And the limitations of these films can be taken to be those of the artists who made them rather than those of the genre. Of course it is almost impossible that silent comedies will ever again be widespread. Moreover, producing one may be financially very risky (though *Silent Movie* was a big commercial success). But none of this proves that the genre is aesthetically dead.

## CONTRIBUTORS, continued

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